St Thomas Reading Spine

Literary Merit





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| **Year 6**  **Fiction Books** |  | **Literary Merit** |
| Kensuke’s Kingdom **(classic)** Michael Morprugo |  | "Kensuke's Kingdom" by Michael Morpurgo is a highly regarded children's novel that has earned significant literary merit.  The novel explores themes of survival, friendship, and the clash of cultures. It tells the story of Michael, a boy stranded on a deserted island, and his relationship with Kensuke, a Japanese man who has been living there since World War II12. The main characters are well-developed and undergo significant growth throughout the story. Their evolving relationship highlights themes of trust, understanding, resilience, empathy and mutual respect.  The novel is known for its vivid descriptions of the island's natural environment, which immerse readers in the setting and enhance the story's realism. The first-person perspective allows readers to connect deeply with Michael's experiences and emotions. |
| After Tomorrow- Gillian Cross |  | "After Tomorrow" by Gillian Cross is a compelling dystopian novel which explores themes of survival, resilience, and the impact of societal collapse on individuals and families.  The characters are well-developed and relatable and their journey and growth throughout the story provide a deep emotional connection for readers. The book offers a poignant commentary on contemporary issues such as economic instability, immigration, and the refugee crisis. It prompts readers to reflect on the fragility of modern society and the human capacity for adaptation and compassion.  The narrative is gripping and fast-paced, keeping readers engaged from start to finish. The tension and suspense are maintained throughout the story, making it a thrilling read. |
| Gorilla Dawn- Gill Lewis |  | “Gorilla Dawn" by Gill Lewis is a powerful and thought-provoking novel. It explores the conflict between good and evil, innocence and experience.  The characters, particularly Imara and Bobo, are well-developed and complex. Imara, a "Spirit Child" with a scarred face, and Bobo, a boy aspiring to be a park ranger, both undergo significant personal growth throughout the story.  The book uses alternating chapters to present different viewpoints, which helps to broaden the plot and deepen the reader's understanding of the characters and conflicts.  Descriptions of the lush landscapes and the natural world are vivid and immersive, enhancing the reader's connection to the setting and the story.  The novel is emotionally gripping, with a strong message about the power of friendship, courage, and the bond between humans and animals. |
| Wonder- R. J. Palacio |  | The book tells the story of August "Auggie" Pullman, a young boy with a facial deformity, and his experiences navigating school and social interactions for the first time.  The novel explores profound themes such as kindness, acceptance, and the impact of appearance on social interactions. These themes resonate with children at St Thomas’, promoting empathy and understanding. The first-person narrative helps readers connect deeply with the characters.  Palacio employs a unique narrative structure by presenting the story from multiple perspectives, including Auggie, his sister Via, and his friends Jack and Summer. This approach provides a well-rounded view of the characters' experiences and emotions.  The book falls into the genre of realistic fiction, offering a poignant and relatable portrayal of a child's experience in a world that can be both kind and cruel. |
| When the sky falls. |  | “When the Sky Falls" is a highly acclaimed historical fiction novel. Set in 1941 during World War II, the novel explores themes of friendship, resilience, and the impact of the war.  The book has received numerous accolades and has been praised for its emotional depth, historical accuracy, and compelling storytelling |
| Rose Blanche |  | "Rose Blanche" is a poignant and powerful picture book that explores the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust through the eyes of a young, innocent and naive German girl named Rose Blanche. The story provides a unique and impactful way to convey the atrocities of war and the Holocaust. This perspective allows readers to see the events through the eyes of a child who does not fully understand the gravity of what is happening around her. The book's setting in a small German village and the depiction of the changes brought by the war offer a glimpse into the everyday lives of people during this period.  Roberto Innocenti's illustrations are detailed and evocative, capturing the bleak and somber atmosphere of the time. The book addresses important themes such as innocence, the impact of war on civilians, and the moral complexities of witnessing and understanding human suffering. |
| Hidden Figures |  | "Hidden Figures" sheds light on the previously untold stories of African American women mathematicians who played crucial roles at NASA during the Space Race. By bringing these hidden figures to the forefront, Shetterly provides a more inclusive and accurate account of history.  The book explores themes of perseverance, discrimination, and the pursuit of excellence. It highlights the intersection of race, gender, and professional achievement, showcasing how these women overcame significant barriers to contribute to scientific progress.  The book is well-researched and written in a compelling narrative style that blends biography, history, and social commentary. This approach makes the complex subject matter accessible and engaging. |
| Tom Cranes Rabbit - |  | "Tom Crean's Rabbit" is a charming children's book that tells a true story from Scott's last voyage to Antarctica in 1910. The narrative is based on diaries kept by the men on the ship "Terra Nova".  The story follows Tom Crean, a sailor, as he searches for a warm and cozy place on the ship for his pet rabbit to have her babies. The book is beautifully illustrated, capturing the magnificence of the Antarctic landscape.  The book is praised for its simple yet engaging storyline and historical accuracy. |
| Way Home – Libby Hathron |  | The story addresses the serious issue of homelessness through the eyes of a young boy named Shane. It encourages readers to develop empathy and understanding for those who are less fortunate, making it a powerful tool for social awareness.  Gregory Rogers' illustrations are integral to the storytelling. The detailed and expressive artwork adds depth to the narrative, capturing the gritty reality of urban life while also highlighting moments of tenderness and hope.  Hathorn's writing is both lyrical and direct, effectively conveying the emotions and experiences of the protagonist.  Shane is a well-developed character whose resilience and kindness shine through despite his difficult circumstances. His journey and interactions with the stray cat he be-friends provide a touching exploration of friendship and survival.  The urban setting is depicted with authenticity, providing a realistic backdrop that enhances the story's impact. This setting helps readers understand the challenges faced by those living on the streets. |

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| **Year 5**  **Fiction Books** |  | **Literary Merit** |
| Holes- **(classic)** Louis Sachar |  | “Holes” explores themes of fate, justice, and the interconnectedness of past and present (flashbacks). Sachar employs a multi-layered narrative that weaves together the stories of Stanley, his ancestors, and the history of Green Lake. This structure (flashbacks) adds depth and richness to the plot.  The characters, particularly Stanley and Zero, are well-developed and undergo significant growth throughout the story. Their friendship and personal journeys are central to the novel's emotional impact.  The novel is rich in symbolism, with elements like the holes the boys dig representing the search for truth and redemption. The recurring motifs of onions and peaches also play significant roles in the story.  The book highlight’s themes of perseverance, friendship, and the impact of history on the present. |
| Boy at the Back of the Class- Onjali Q. Rauf |  | “The Boy at the Back of the Class” explores themes of empathy, diversity, social injustice, inclusion, and the refugee experience. It tells the story of Ahmet, a young Syrian refugee, and his integration into a new school in London. The book highlights the importance of kindness and understanding in overcoming prejudice.  The characters, particularly the narrator and Ahmet, are well-developed and relatable. The narrator's determination to befriend Ahmet and help him find his family showcases the power of friendship and compassion.  Raúf's narrative style is engaging and accessible and the first-person perspective allows readers to connect deeply with the narrator's thoughts and feelings1.  The book offers a poignant commentary on contemporary issues such as the refugee crisis and the challenges faced by displaced children. It encourages readers to reflect on their own attitudes towards refugees and the importance of standing up against injustice. |
| Night Bus Hero - Onjali Q. Rauf |  | “Night Bus Hero” explores important themes such as bullying – and it’s impact, homelessness, social injustice and the potential for personal change. It tells the story of Hector, a boy who is initially a bully but learns valuable lessons about kindness and empathy through his interactions with a homeless man named Thomas.  The characters, particularly Hector, are well-developed and undergo significant growth throughout the story. Hector's transformation from a bully to someone who understands and helps others is central to the novel's message – you can make a change.  Just like ‘The Boy at the back of the Class’, the first-person perspective allows readers to connect deeply with Hector's thoughts and feelings1.  The book offers a moving commentary on current social issues, particularly the challenges faced by homeless individuals. It encourages readers to reflect on their own attitudes towards homelessness and the importance of compassion and understanding. |
| Hacker- Malorie Blackman |  | Hacker explores themes of justice, determination, and the power of technology. It follows Vicky, a young girl who uses her hacking skills to prove her father's innocence after he is falsely accused of embezzlement.  The characters, particularly Vicky and her adopted brother Gib, are well-developed and relatable. Vicky's journey from a regular student to a determined hacker showcases her growth and resilience.  The narrative is fast-paced and filled with suspense, making it a thrilling read for young audiences. The tension and stakes are high as Vicky navigates the dangers of hacking to uncover the truth.  The book offers a commentary on the ethical implications of hacking and the importance of standing up for what is right. It encourages readers to think critically about the use of technology and its impact on society. |
| The Return – Aaron Becker |  | "Return" is the final instalment of the picture book trilogy, following on from "Journey – Year 3" and "Quest – Year 4"  As a wordless picture book, "Return" relies entirely on its stunning illustrations to create a vivid, immersive world that captivates readers. Becker's illustrations are not only beautiful but also rich in detail and emotion. The intricate landscapes, castles, and creatures he creates draw readers into the story  The book explores themes of adventure, imagination, and the bond between parent and child. The main character, a young girl, embarks on a fantastical journey to a magical realm, and this time, her father follows her, highlighting the importance of parental involvement and understanding.  Despite the absence of text, "Return" conveys a powerful emotional narrative. The story of a father reconnecting with his daughter through shared adventure resonates deeply with readers, making it a touching and memorable experience. |
| The Promise - |  | ‘The Promise’ novel explores themes of hope, transformation, environmental stewardship, empathy, the impact of individual actions and the power of nature. It tells the story of a young girl who, after making a promise to plant acorns, transforms a bleak, urban landscape into a vibrant, green space.  Davies's writing is lyrical and evocative, with a poetic quality that enhances the story's emotional impact. The narrative is simple yet profound, conveying deep messages.  Laura Carlin's illustrations complement the text beautifully, using a muted colour palette to depict the initial grim setting and gradually introducing vibrant colours as the environment transforms.  The book is considered a modern fable, with a timeless message about the importance of caring for the environment and the positive impact one person can have on the world. It encourages discussions about sustainability and the importance of keeping promise. |
| Who Let the Gods Out – Maz Evans |  | Who Let the Gods Out by Maz Evans is a delightful blend of fantasy and adventure. The story follows Elliott Hooper, whose life changes dramatically when he meets Virgo, a young Zodiac goddess. Together, they accidentally release the daemon Thanatos and seek help from the old Olympian gods. The plot is filled with twists, humor, and excitement, keeping readers hooked.  The characters are well-developed and relatable. Elliott's struggles with his mother's illness and the impending threat to his home add depth to his character. The gods, portrayed with quirky personalities, bring humor and charm to the story. The novel explores themes such as friendship, bravery, and the importance of family. It also touches on more serious issues like mental health and coping with loss1.  The book introduces readers to Greek mythology in a fun and accessible way which links well with the Year 5 project ‘Ground-breaking Greeks’. It provides a modern twist on ancient myths, making them relevant and engaging.  Maz Evans's writing is witty and fast-paced, using of cliff-hangers and vivid descriptions, keeping the reader hooked. |
| ***The Arrival –*** *Shaun Tan* |  | The book is entirely wordless, relying on detailed and evocative illustrations to convey the narrative. This unique approach allows readers to interpret the story through their own perspectives, making it a deeply personal and immersive experience.  The story is an allegory for the immigrant experience, exploring themes of displacement, cultural differences, and the search for belonging. It resonates with readers by highlighting the universal human experience of seeking a new home and adapting to unfamiliar environments.  The illustrations are rich with emotion, capturing the main characters journey from fear and isolation to hope and acceptance. The blend of realistic and fantastical elements creates a visually stunning world that enhances the narrative's impact. The illustrations often resemble aged photographs, adding a sense of timelessness to the story.  Tan's intention was to build empathy in readers by making them pause and think about the immigrant experience. The book encourages readers to consider the challenges faced by immigrants and to develop a greater understanding of their journeys. |

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| **Year 4**  **Fiction Books** |  | **Literary Merit** |
| Sky Hawk-Gill Lewis |  | ‘Sky Hawk’ explores themes of friendship, loyalty, and wildlife conservation. It tells the story of Callum and Iona, two children who form an unlikely friendship as they work together to protect a rare osprey in Scotland.  The characters are well-developed and relatable. Their growth and the bond they form over their shared mission add depth to the story.  Lewis's writing is powerful and evocative, vividly depicting the Scottish landscape and the natural world. Her descriptions immerse readers in the setting and enhance the emotional impact of the story.  The book raises awareness about the importance of protecting endangered species and the environment. It encourages the children to think about conservation and the impact of human actions on wildlife. “Sky Hawk” has been praised for its compelling storytelling and its ability to address important themes in an accessible way. |
| Anglo-Saxon Boy- Tony Bradman |  | ‘Anglo-Saxon Boy’ explores themes of courage, loyalty, and the complexities of family dynamics with historical authenticity. It follows the story of Magnus, the son of Harold Godwinson, as he navigates the turbulent events leading up to the Battle of Hastings in 1066.  Bradman meticulously incorporates historical details, providing readers with an immersive experience of the Anglo-Saxon period. The book offers insights into the political and social landscape of 11th-century England.  Magnus's journey from a boy to a young warrior highlights his growth and the challenges he faces in a time of conflict.  The narrative is action-packed and filled with suspense, making it an engaging read for young audiences. The story's pacing keeps readers invested in Magnus's adventures and the historical events unfolding around him. It encourages discussions about history, bravery, and the impact of war on individuals and families. |
| Secrets of a Sun King- Emma Carroll |  | ‘Secrets of a Sun King’ explores themes of adventure, mystery, and the fascination with ancient Egypt with historical accuracy. It follows the story of Lilian Kaye, a young girl who embarks on a journey to return a mysterious package to its rightful place in Egypt to break a curse.  Set in 1922, the book provides a rich historical backdrop, coinciding with the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. This historical context adds depth and authenticity to the story, making it both educational and engaging.  The narrative is fast-paced and filled with suspense, keeping readers hooked from start to finish. The blend of historical facts with fictional elements creates a compelling and immersive reading experience. The book allows for discussions about history, culture, and the impact of historical discoveries on the World as we know it. |
| Quest- Aaron Becker |  | "Quest" by Aaron Becker is the second book in his acclaimed wordless picture book trilogy, following "Journey – Year 3."  As a wordless picture book, "Quest" relies entirely on its stunning illustrations to convey the story. The book explores themes of adventure, imagination, and the power of creativity. It follows two children who embark on a magical quest to rescue a king and his kingdom, using their coloured markers to navigate various challenges.  Becker's illustrations are not only beautiful but also rich in detail and emotion. The intricate landscapes, architectural wonders, and fantastical elements draw readers into the story.  Despite the absence of text, "Quest" conveys a powerful emotional narrative. The children's journey and their determination to help the king resonate deeply with readers, making it a touching and memorable experience. |
| King of the Cloud Forests – Michael Morpurgo |  | "King of the Cloud Forests" is a captivating children's fantasy and adventure novel. It explores themes of survival, identity, and the clash of cultures. It follows the story of Ashley Anderson, a boy who must flee China with his Uncle Sung during the Japanese invasion and navigate the treacherous journey across the Himalayas.  Ashley's growth and resilience in the face of adversity are central to the story, highlighting the strength of the human spirit.  Morpurgo's storytelling, blends adventure with emotional depth, creating a compelling and immersive reading experience. The novel uses symbolism and allegory to convey deeper meanings. The yetis, for example, represent a mystical and protective force, adding a layer of fantasy to the realistic setting.  The book teaches themes of resilience, cultural understanding, and the impact of war and encourages discussions about history, survival, and the importance of empathy. |
| Beowulf **(Classic)** – Michael Morpurgo |  | Michael Morpurgo's retelling of Beowulf breathes new life into the ancient epic, using modern, straightforward language while retaining the essence of the original story. This timeless tale of heroism and adventure resonates with a new generation.  While simplifying the language, Morpurgo stays true to the core elements of the story, including Beowulf's battles with Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon.  This adaptation serves as an excellent introduction to classic literature, helping young readers appreciate the themes and historical context of the original Beowulf. |

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| **Year 3**  **Fiction Books** |  | **Literary Merit** |
| The Stolen Spear – Saviour Pirotta |  | The Stolen Spear by Saviour Pirotta is a captivating Stone Age adventure. The story follows a young boy named Wolf, who is cast out of his village after a sacred spearhead is stolen. Accompanied only by his loyal dog, Shadow, Wolf embarks on a journey to recover the spear and restore his honour.  The book is celebrated for its themes of bravery, self-belief, and the challenges of being different. It provides a rich historical context, set around the Orkney Islands in Scotland. |
| Escape from Pompeii – Christina Balit |  | Escape from Pompeii is a highly regarded children's book that combines historical fiction with vivid illustrations to bring the ancient city of Pompeii to life. The story follows Tranio, an actor's son, and his friend Livia, the baker's daughter, as they witness the catastrophic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 791.  The book is praised for its ability to engage young readers with themes of friendship, survival, and the impact of natural disasters. It provides a rich historical context, making it an excellent resource for teaching about ancient Rome and volcanoes1. The narrative is both educational and emotionally compelling, helping children understand the human side of historical events. |
| The Iron Man- **(classic)**Ted Huges |  | ‘Iron Man’ by Ted Hughes is a classic children's novel that explores themes of redemption and transformation. The Iron Man, initially feared as a destructive force, undergoes a significant change and becomes a protector and saviour.  Hughes uses rich symbolism and allegory throughout the book. The Iron Man can be seen as a metaphor for humanity, representing the potential for change and the importance of understanding and compassion.  The characters, particularly the Iron Man and Hogarth, are well-developed. Hogarth's journey from fear to friendship with the Iron Man underscores the novel's themes of empathy and understanding.  Hughes' vivid imagery and imaginative storytelling captivate readers and bring the story to life. |
| Boy who Biked the World- Alistair Humpreys |  | The book is based on Alastair Humphreys' real-life journey around the world, making the story both adventurous and inspiring1. As Tom travels through different continents, readers are introduced to various cultures, landscapes, and people, broadening their understanding of the world/global awareness.  The book includes journal entries and illustrations that provide an immersive experience, helping children learn about geography, history, and social studies in an engaging way.  Many literary techniques are used such as descriptive language, dialogue, and character development, which can help improve children's reading and comprehension. |
| Stig of the Dump- **(classic)** Clive King |  | "Stig of the Dump" by Clive King is a classic, beloved children's novel first published in 1963. The book explores themes of friendship, imagination, and adventure, focusing on the relationship between Barney and Stig, a caveman, highlighting the importance of understanding and accepting differences.  The story is set in a disused chalk pit, which becomes a magical place of discovery and creativity for Barney. This setting encourages readers to see the potential for adventure in everyday places.  Barney's character grows throughout the story as he learns to be resourceful and brave. Stig, though a caveman, is portrayed with depth and humanity, making him a memorable character. In addition, Clive King uses descriptive language and vivid imagery to bring the story to life. |
| Journey- Aaron Becker (1/3) |  | "Journey" by Aaron Becker is a wordless picture book that uses detailed and expressive illustrations to tell the story, developing visual literacy skills as children learn to interpret and understand the narrative through images alone.  The story follows a young girl who draws a magic door on her bedroom wall and embarks on an adventure. This encourages children to use their imagination and creativity, both in interpreting the story and in their own creative endeavours.  The book explores themes of adventure, courage, and friendship, universal themes that resonate with young readers.  The wordless format can be particularly engaging for reluctant readers or those who struggle with traditional text. It allows them to engage with the story at their own pace and interpret the narrative in their own way. Overall, "Journey" is a powerful tool for developing literacy skills, fostering creativity, and encouraging a love of reading. |
| Born to Run – Michael |  | "Born to Run" has been praised for its emotional depth and engaging storytelling. The book follows the journey of a greyhound named Best Mate, who lives through three distinct lives, each with different owners. The story explores themes of survival, friendship, and finding a true home.  Morpurgo's simple yet powerful writing style makes the novel accessible to young readers while addressing complex emotions and situations. The book's literary merit lies in its ability to evoke empathy and understanding. |
| A Bus Called Heaven |  | "A Bus Called Heaven" revolves around a young girl named Stella who discovers an abandoned bus with a sign that says "Heaven." With the help of her neighbours, she transforms it into a vibrant community centre. This narrative celebrates diversity, showcasing a multicultural community coming together.  The book conveys powerful messages about hope, transformation, and the impact of collective effort. It shows how a seemingly insignificant object can become a symbol of togetherness and positivity.  Overall, "A Bus Called Heaven" is celebrated for its heart-warming story, beautiful illustrations, and its ability to convey important social themes. |

KS1 and Early Years books have a PSHE focus – Morals!

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| **Year 2**  **Fiction Books** |  | **Literary Merit** |
| The Hodgegheg- **(classic)** Dick King-Smith |  | "The Hodgeheg" by Dick King-Smith is a charming children's novel that  follows the adventures of Max, a hedgehog determined to find a safe way to cross the road. The engaging and humorous plot captures the interest of young readers.  The story emphasizes themes such as perseverance, problem-solving and the importance of family. In addition, Max's character is well-developed, showing growth and determination throughout the story. His interactions with other characters add depth and humour to the narrative.  Dick King-Smith uses descriptive language, playful dialogue, and vivid imagery to bring the story to life.  The book can be used to discuss topics such as road safety, animal behaviour, and environmental awareness. It also encourages empathy and understanding towards animals. |
| Owl who was Afraid of the Dark- Jill Tomlinson |  | "The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark" by Jill Tomlinson is a beloved children's book that follows Plop, a young barn owl who is afraid of the dark. Through a series of encounters with different characters, Plop learns to overcome his fear and appreciate the beauty of the night.  Plop's character grows throughout the story as he learns from his experiences and the people he meets. His journey from fear to courage and acceptance is well-crafted and inspiring.  Jill Tomlinson uses descriptive language, engaging dialogue, and vivid imagery to bring the story to life..  The book encourages discussion around topics such as nocturnal animals, the night sky, and overcoming fears. It also encourages empathy and understanding towards others. |
| George’s Marvellous Medicine- Roald Dahl –  **Classic** |  | "George's Marvellous Medicine" by Roald Dahl is a classic children's novel.  It follows the main character George, a young boy who concocts a magical medicine to deal with his grumpy grandmother. The plot is filled with humour and unexpected twists, making it highly engaging.  The novel explores themes such as creativity, mischief, and the consequences of one's actions. These themes are relatable and encourage children to think about their own behaviour and its impact.  George's character is well-developed, showing his ingenuity and determination. His interactions with his grandmother and the resulting chaos add depth and humour to the story.  Roald Dahl uses vivid imagery, playful language, and engaging dialogue to bring the story to life and Quentin Blake’s distinctive and whimsical illustrations complement the text and enhance the reading experience. |
| Look Up!  by Nathan Bryon |  | "Look Up!" by Nathan Bryon, illustrated by Dapo Adeola, is a vibrant and engaging picture book. The book follows Rocket, a young girl passionate about space, who encourages her community to look up and witness a meteor shower. The storyline is both inspiring and relatable, capturing the excitement of following one's dreams.  The book explores themes such as ambition, curiosity, and the importance of pursuing one's interests. These themes are empowering for our young readers and encourage them to dream big.  "Look Up!" is praised for its positive representation of race, gender, and culture. Rocket is a strong, enthusiastic character who serves as a great role model for children of a similar age.  The book is sprinkled with facts about meteors and space, making it both entertaining and educational. Not only this, but Dapo Adeola's illustrations are vibrant and expressive, adding depth and emotion to the story. The visuals help bring Rocket's enthusiasm and the beauty of the night sky to life. |
| Ruby’s Worry: A Big Bright Feelings Book  by Tom Percival |  | "Ruby's Worry" by Tom Percival is a beautifully illustrated picture book that has been praised for its ability to address the emotion of worry, anxiety, emotional well-being, and the importance of talking about one's feelings. These themes are crucial for children's mental health and provide a gentle way to discuss worries and fears.  The book follows Ruby, a young girl who discovers a worry that grows bigger and bigger. Ruby's journey from being overwhelmed by her worry to finding a way to cope with it is well-crafted and inspiring. Her character development encourages children to understand and manage their own emotions. The illustrations are vibrant and expressive, adding depth and emotion to the story. The visuals also help convey the growing size of Ruby's worry and her eventual relief.  The book can be used as a tool to discuss emotional literacy, helping children recognize and articulate their feelings. It also encourages empathy and understanding towards others who may be experiencing similar emotions. |
| Katie Morag and the  New Pier - Mairi Hedderwick |  | The Katie Morag series, including "Katie Morag and the New Pier," is praised for its ability to develop emotional literacy in young readers. The stories often explore complex emotions and social situations, helping children understand and navigate their feelings.  The book provides a vivid portrayal of life on a Scottish island, offering readers insight into the unique cultural and geographical aspects of island life. This is particularly valuable for our children who live in an urban setting, helping to broadened their understanding of different lifestyles.  The illustrations add depth and context to the story. They not just visually appealing but also serve as a tool for storytelling, enhancing the reader's engagement and comprehension.  Katie Morag is a well-rounded character whose adventures and interactions provide valuable lessons in resilience, problem-solving, and community spirit. |
| After the Fall – Dan Santat |  | The story delves into themes of fear, resilience, and recovery. It follows Humpty Dumpty after his famous fall, exploring his journey to overcome his fear of heights. This emotional depth helps children understand and process their own fears and challenges.  The book addresses universal themes such as perseverance, courage, and the importance of getting back up after a setback.  The illustrations are both vibrant and expressive, adding layers of meaning to the text. In addition, the story is well-structured, with a clear beginning, middle, and end. The pacing is effective, keeping readers engaged while delivering a powerful message about overcoming adversity.  Humpty Dumpty's character is developed in a way that is relatable and inspiring. His journey from fear to triumph is depicted with sensitivity and insight, encouraging readers to empathize with his struggles and celebrate his successes. |
| Lazy Lion - Mwenye Hadithi |  | The story imparts valuable lessons about hard work, self-reliance, and the consequences of laziness. Lazy Lion's refusal to build his own house and his reliance on other animals highlight the importance of taking responsibility for one's own needs.  The book is part of the African Animal Tales series, which introduces young readers to African folklore and wildlife. This cultural representation is important for broadening children's understanding of different traditions and environments.  The characters in the story, particularly Lazy Lion, are well-developed and relatable. The lion's journey from laziness to learning to live with the consequences of his actions provides a meaningful arc that resonates with readers. |

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| **Year 1**  **Fiction Books** |  | **Literary Merit** |
| Owl Babies- Martin Waddell |  | "Owl Babies" is a beloved children's picture book that tells the story of three baby owls who wake up to find their mother missing and anxiously wait for her return. The book is praised for its emotional depth and stunning illustrations.  The story addresses common childhood fears of separation and reassures young readers that their caregivers will return. ‘Owl Babies’ is a simple yet powerful narrative that captures the anxiety and relief experienced by the owlets, making it relatable for young readers.  Patrick Benson's illustrations are highly acclaimed for their detailed and expressive quality, enhancing the emotional impact of the story. In addition, the repetitive text structure is engaging for young children, helping them anticipate and participate in the story. |
| Where the Wild Things are **(classic)** - Maurice Sendak |  | "Where the Wild Things Are" is classic children's story which follows a young boy named Max who, after being sent to his room for misbehaving, imagines traveling to a fantastical land inhabited by wild creatures.  The book explores the power of imagination and the emotional journey of a child dealing with anger and reconciliation. Max's adventure represents his inner turmoil and eventual understanding of his emotions. The wild things symbolize the untamed aspects of Max's personality and emotions. His journey to their land and his eventual return home reflect his process of self-discovery and emotional regulation.  Maurice Sendak's illustrations are integral to the story, providing a visual representation of Max's imaginative world. The detailed and expressive artwork enhances the narrative and engages readers. |
| Penguin Small- Mick Inkpen |  | "Penguin Small" by Mick Inkpen is a charming children's book that tells the story of a little penguin who is afraid of the water. With the help of a snowman and a whale, Penguin Small embarks on a fantastical journey to join his friends at the South Pole.  The story emphasizes themes of adventure, overcoming fears, and the importance of friendship. Penguin Small's journey is both exciting and heart-warming.  Mick Inkpen's illustrations are delightful and engaging, featuring fold-out pages that add an interactive element to the reading experience. In addition, the book is filled with whimsical elements, such as the Neverwozanoceros and the snowman who never melts, which capture the imagination of young readers. Not only does the narrative address the feeling of loneliness but also the joy of reuniting with friends. |
| Hair Love- Matthew A Cherry |  | "Hair Love" is a heart-warming children's book that celebrates the bond between a father and his daughter, as well as the beauty of natural hair. It addresses the lack of representation in children's literature by focusing on a Black family and celebrating Black hair. This representation is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and self-worth in young readers.  The story emphasizes self-confidence, pride in one's natural hair, and the loving relationship between fathers and daughters. These themes are particularly empowering for young readers, especially those from underrepresented communities.  Overall, ‘Hair Love’ is celebrated for its positive message, beautiful illustrations, and cultural significance. |
| Wake Up Do-  by Julia Donaldson |  | ‘Wake Up Do, Lydia Lou!’ is a delightful children's book that tells the story of a little ghost trying to wake up Lydia Lou. Despite his best efforts and the help of his noisy animal friends, Lydia Lou remains fast asleep.  The playful narrative is full of fun sounds and repetition, making it an engaging read for young children. The book encourages children to join in with the sounds, making it an interactive and enjoyable reading experience. |
| Dogger – Shirley Hughes |  | Dogger is a wonderful example of a picture book that combines emotional depth, relatable themes, and strong illustrations to create a memorable and meaningful reading experience for children. It can also serve as an excellent text for discussing empathy, narrative structure, and character development. |

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| Reception | Fiction Books | Literary Merit |
| Colour Monster |  | The Colour Monster offers an elegantly simple narrative: a lovable monster wakes up confused, laden with mixed-up emotions. A caring little girl helps him sort his feelings by assigning each a colour. The book serves as a clear, tangible way for children to identify and articulate their own emotions, fostering emotional awareness and expression. It sparks conversations about feelings and supports emotional management strategies.  Anna Llenas’ illustrations are rich and textured—using collage, crayon, paint, and mixed media—to deliver depth and expressiveness minimal text alone couldn’t achieve. |
| Once there were Giants |  | The story follows a baby growing up surrounded by “giants”—the adults around her—until she eventually becomes one herself, welcoming a new baby into the family fold. This poetic cycle conveys the simple, profound experience of growing and becoming parental figures in turn. Penny Dale’s illustrations bring a tender realism to each stage of life.  This book offers more than a charming story — it to explore timelines, family relationships, and personal development with our young readers. |
| How to catch a star |  | The story follows a little boy who dreams of catching a star. He tries in many ways—waiting, climbing, fishing, even building a spaceship—but fails, until he discovers a starfish by the sea, which fulfills his longing in an unexpected way. Thematically, it celebrates childlike curiosity, imagination, and resilience.  The ending conveys a gentle message: dreams may come true in forms we don’t expect, echoing broader ideas of hope and creativity.  How to catch a Star supports emotional literacy, showing resilience in the face of disappointment. In addition, it encourages imaginative thinking and creative problem-solving. |
| Cave Baby |  | Julia Donaldson’s Cave Baby, illustrated by Emily Gravett, tells the story of a young child who cannot resist painting across the walls of his cave, much to the frustration of his parents. When a mammoth carries him away to another cave, the narrative seems poised to turn frightening, yet the outcome is both affirming and celebratory: the baby’s paintings are recognised as creative and valuable. This structure reinforces the book’s central themes of self-expression, recognition, and belonging. At its heart, Cave Baby explores the tension between creativity and authority, the need for identity and validation, and the comfort of finding a community that appreciates one’s individuality. These themes resonate universally, encouraging children to see imagination as a powerful and positive force.  Donaldson’s lyrical rhyming verse is another of the book’s great strengths. She employs a carefully crafted rhyme scheme that creates a natural musical cadence, making the story highly engaging when read aloud. The repetition and rhythm not only give the text its charm but also support early literacy development, as young listeners are able to anticipate sounds, patterns, and words. This makes Cave Baby both entertaining and educational, seamlessly combining the pleasures of poetry with the developmental benefits of rhyme and rhythm.  On an emotional level, children are quick to empathise with the baby’s frustration at being misunderstood. The eventual recognition of his creativity offers a reassuring sense of validation, demonstrating to young readers that their voices and expressions are meaningful. This opens up rich opportunities for discussion around rules, consequences, expression, and affirmation—important areas of learning in early childhood.  The literary merit of Cave Baby lies in its ability to blend poetic rhythm, humour, and thematic depth with accessible storytelling. |